



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SUPERVISOR RIDLEY-THOMAS ANNOUNCES SUMMER LITERACY PROGRAMS IN THE SECOND DISTRICT

Freedom Schools, an exciting six-week literacy and enrichment program for children ages five to 18 years old, returns to the Second District this summer.

The program, which begins this week, will host over 200 students. These scholars will attend summer school at one of four Second District sites: First Church of God in Inglewood; First New Christian Fellowship in South L.A.; Bethel A.M.E. Church in South L.A.; and Community Coalition at Foshay Learning Center in South L.A.

Established in 1992 by Children's Defense Fund founder and children's advocate Marian Wright Edelman, Freedom Schools provide rigorous, quality summer and after school instruction to children in urban environments. The programming, which is both challenging and entertaining, is based on the belief that all children are capable of learning and achieving high standards.

Last summer, the Children Defense Fund Freedom School program served over 9,600 children in 84 cities and 29 states, and Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, worked with Edelman to introduce the program to the Second District last July.

The Freedom School curriculum includes reading, arts, crafts, dance, music, field trips, sports, and community service, all provided in a nurturing environment that fosters growth and development. Students begin the morning with Harambee, a time of informal sharing based on the Kenyan tradition of community, in which

students read aloud, sing, cheer and chant motivational songs, announcements and recognitions, closing with a moment of silence.

Throughout the afternoon, students read from a selection of books chosen by a national committee based on the literary work of the country's best writers and illustrators.

"This program uniquely integrates reading, learning, and civic engagement," said Supervisor Ridley-Thomas. "These tools are essential to life and empowerment."

The mission of Freedom Schools is to ensure every child regardless of race or ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or geographic origin has a healthy, fair, safe, and moral start to education, combining literacy, nutritious foods and a positive learning environment.

According to an evaluation conducted by Philliber Research Associates for the Kansas City Freedom School program, students not only improve their reading skills but gain a love for learning.

The program is rooted in the work of the Civil Rights movement, specifically the work of college-age youth during the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer Project. Freedom Schools apply an intergenerational approach in which college students are trained as "Servant Leader Interns" who work as reading tutors and role models, motivating children to develop positive attitudes about themselves and their abilities.

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